

## Cord Care

Cleaning and keeping the umbilical cord dry as it loosens and falls off



### What to Know

- Each health care provider may have his or her own method for cord care. If rubbing alcohol (70 percent isopropyl) is recommended, it may be purchased to use with cotton balls or swabs. You may buy prepackaged alcohol wipes.
- The alcohol helps to dry the cord while preventing infection.
- Your baby may be startled by the cold alcohol, but it does not sting or burn.
- Do not heat the alcohol.



### What to Do

- Follow your health care provider's instructions regarding cord care.
- Wash your hands before caring for the cord.
- Saturate a cotton ball, swab or Q-tip with rubbing alcohol (70 percent isopropyl) or water.
- Gently swab around the base of the cord several times with each diaper change. Repeat this with two to three new cotton balls, swabs or Q-tips.
- With a fresh, dry cotton ball, swab or Q-tip, absorb the excess alcohol or water at the base of the cord.
- Fold the front of the diaper down to allow the cord to dry.

- Never cut or pull on the cord; it will fall off within two or three weeks naturally.
- Never put oil or lotion on or around your baby's cord.
- When the cord falls off, continue to clean the belly button for a few more days.
- A small amount of yellow drainage may continue for two to three days.
- To assist with cord healing, keep the umbilicus (belly button) open to air as much as possible. (Caregivers may want to avoid using bodysuits ["Onesie" t-shirts] until the cord falls off and the umbilicus is healed.)



### When to Call Your Health Care Provider

- If there is bleeding of more than a drop or two.
- If you see redness of the skin around the cord that extends to the baby's tummy.
- If there is pus at the base of the cord.
- If there is an unusually strong or foul odor.
- If the cord has not fallen off after three weeks.

